SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (NT) – from 1 Timothy 1:17

A. "the King" – This doxology is similar to 1 Tim. 6:15-16, which may reflect Deut. 10:17. It reflects the language of the later synagogue ("the King of the Universe," cf. Rev. 15:3) and the Jews of the diaspora.

It is quite possible that Paul is quoting a creed or hymn of the early church as he does in 1 Tim. 3:16; 6:15-16 and 2 Tim. 2:11-13.

B. "Eternal" – This is the first of four powerful ADJECTIVES, which is the same one used in the phrase "eternal life" in 1 Tim. 1:16, but here to describe God. It is literally "of the ages" (*aiōnion*), which may be imagery for eternity or a reference to the Jewish concept of two ages:

1. a current evil age characterized by independence and rebellion (angel and human)
2. a coming promised age of righteousness brought by the Spirit and implemented by the Messiah (see SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME).

C. "immortal" – This is literally "incorruptible." It refers to imagery of the ever-living, only-living One (YHWH from the Hebrew VERB "to be," cf. Exod. 3:14, see SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, D). Only God has life in Himself (cf. Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16). All other life is a derived gift and a stewardship. It comes only through the grace of the Father, the work of Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10), and the ministry of the Spirit.

D. "invisible" – This is used in the sense of the spiritual realm (cf. Col. 1:15) or possibly YHWH as the unseen God (i.e., no images, cf. Exod. 33:20; Deut. 4:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). God is the eternal Spirit present in all of creation!

E. "the only God" – This refers to Jewish monotheism (see SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM). This context reflects Israel's unique worldview. The Bible presents mankind with a faith perspective beyond the five senses.

1. There is one and only one God (cf. Gen. 1:1; Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35-39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22; 22:32; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 86:8,10; Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:6-7,14,18,21-22; 46:5,9; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 10:6; 16:20).
2. He is a personal, creator, redeemer God (cf. Genesis 1-2; 3:15; Psalm 103-104).
3. He gives promises of hope and restoration by means of Messiah (cf. Isaiah 53; Micah 5).
4. Faith in Messiah repairs the breach of rebellion (the gospel; see SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL).
5. Whosoever believes in Messiah may have eternal life (the gospel).
   The Textus Receptus, following the Greek uncial manuscripts ℵ^{c}, D^{c}, K, L, and P, adds "wise" (NKJV, "to God who alone is wise"). This addition is absent in the Greek manuscripts ℵ*, A, D*, F, G, and H*. It may be a scribal addition from Rom. 16:27. The UBS^{4} gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).

F. "*be* honor and glory" – This is basically the meaning of the OT term *kabod* (cf. 1 Tim. 1:11). It is used several times in the book of Revelation along with other praises (cf. Rev. 4:9,11; 5:12,13; 7:12).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kabod*, see SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY [*kabod*, OT]) was originally a commercial term referring to a pair of scales which meant "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 15:16; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer.

1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term "glory" is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to "the righteousness of God"
2. it may refer to the "holiness" or "perfection" of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22; Rom. 3:9-18) It is first used of YHWH's presence with His people (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10).

G. "forever and ever" – This is literally "ages of the ages," an idiom for eternity (cf. Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20; 2 Tim. 4:18). This same term is used in 1 Tim. 4:16 for "eternal life" and in 2 Tim. 4:18 for "King eternal." See SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (Greek idiom).

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